

IMAGES OF THE WORLD IN BRAZIL:

international news in two daily
newspapers in 2006

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Associação Brasileira
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ABSTRACT The dependence of Brazilian press on the international news agencies suggests that, despite the evolution of technology which now facilitates the access to information, there has been no advance in the basic issues that motivated the debate on the equilibrium necessary in the worldwide circulation of information. The analysis of the journalistic content of the international news published in a specific week of 2006 in the newspapers *Jornal do Brasil*, in Rio de Janeiro, and *O Estado de S. Paulo*, in Sao Paulo, despite the technological transformation in the last decades, shows that Brazil remains a peripheral nation, and the Brazilian foreign correspondents today play much more the role of war correspondents, with their professional movements generally guided by the degree of importance of and by proximity (not geographic, but that of varied interests) to the conflicts that break out in different points of the planet.

KEY-WORDS content analysis, comparative data, geographical location.

Introduction

The field of international communication – and of journalism in particular – has merited little research in Brazil. In the education sphere, some years ago “International Communication Systems” ceased to be a mandatory study area in the undergraduate curriculum. When they are available for the students, these subjects are generally elective or supplementary, with a reduced hour load (45 hours) and an exaggeratedly wide coverage. On the postgraduate level the situation is no different: initiatives specifically concerned with research in international communication are still rare in the

Brazilian masters and doctorate courses. Based on this situation and considering the obligatory requirement of an academic diploma for practicing the journalistic profession, it is hardly a surprise that international journalism lies outside the prospects that are presented as work opportunities for young journalists and that are considered to be important in the newsrooms. Finally, this is a sector that has been excluded from the agenda of academic researchers in Brazil.

These arguments justify this presentation, which has made use of some methodological elements of the inter-institutional and international research which resulted in the report “Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries”, published in 1985 by UNESCO as part of the study called “Foreign Images” and carried out in the context of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (IAMCR). It deals with an updated reading (or rereading) of the international news published in a specific week of 2006 in the newspapers *Jornal do Brasil*, in Rio de Janeiro, and *O Estado de S. Paulo* – the same newspapers that served as a reference point for the research on which this text is based.

The analysis of the journalistic content of the two newspapers was carried out from July 22 to 28, 2006, with a reconfirmation on the last Monday in the month of September (the 25th). Among the reasons that motivated this survey was the indication, in the text of the presentation of the original report, that the work developed at the end of the 1970s should contain an historical dimension, in a way “that makes possible comparisons, let us say, in a period of 20 or 30 years”, since the results presented jointly “represented an excellent basis for follow-up studies”.¹ This is what is being attempted here.

Accordingly, 30 years after the 19th UNESCO General Conference in Nairobi, in which the debate on the imbalance in the flow of information to and from the Third World predominated; 27 years after the joint international survey – carried out simultaneously from April 23 to 28, 1979, in countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Americas; and 21 years after the publication of the general report in 1985, we are presenting here – in due proportion – an updating of at least part of the information relating to international news in Brazil.

The newspapers today

Compared to the end of the 1970s, the first decade of the XXI century shows that the Brazilian media industry has undergone several

alterations. Among the more significant ones, two deserve to be highlighted: 1) political evolution, whose mark today is the free press, a reflection in the media of the re-democratization process initiated in the last year of the 70s (when the process of the opening of the military regime was initiated, with amnesty and the return of the political exiles); and 2) technological evolution, with the reorganization of the media system by means of the Internet, moving away from the concentration on the Rio-São Paulo axis at the end of the 70s and from the command of family groups – in the case of *Jornal do Brasil*, the Nascimento Brito family (heir to the publishing legacy left by the Count and Countess Pereira Carneiro) and in the case of *O Estado de S. Paulo*, the Mesquita family – to private corporative management and with the presence of other (as yet few) regional groups.

The major transformation of *Jornal do Brasil* (JB) began in February 2001, when the port operations and shipbuilding entrepreneur Nelson Tanure took control of the company. Soon after completing 110 years of existence, JB had its trademark rented by the entrepreneur for a period of 60 years (renewable for another 30 years). The business deal of R\$ 70 million (or around US\$ 30 million at the time) also involved the FM radio stations *Cidade* and *Jornal do Brasil*, rented for ten years, and included the purchase of the *Agência JB* and JB Online, the web content of the newspaper that, it is worth recording, was the pioneer in Brazil in launching a version of the print newspaper on the Internet. At the time that the sale of JB was closed, it was thought that the deal was the fruit of the entrepreneurial interest attracted by the possibilities for use of digital technology and by the imminent opening of the media to foreign capital – provided for by the 1988 Constitution and actually regulated in 2002. Thus arose the *Companhia Brasileira de Multimedia (CBM)*, in which 67% of the capital belongs to Tanura and 33% belongs to José Antônio do Nascimento Brito, president of the editorial board and representative of the JB heirs. CBM now also includes the newspaper *Gazeta Mercantil*, the Brazilian edition of Forbes magazine and the CNT Television Network.

In *O Estado de S. Paulo* the changes are more recent. The first general restructuring of the company – which includes two radio stations, Eldorado AM and FM, the *Agência Estado* and the afternoon newspaper *Jornal da Tarde* – occurred in 2003, when a good part of the Mesquita family left the positions they were occupying in the company management. In 2004, as a consequence of the cleaning

up of its finances, the newspaper made a graphic reform and created new sections. In 2006 it completed the merger of the online and traditional newsrooms, a process which had been initiated in 2005, whose “main purpose is to create a synergy between both departments”, following a trend reported in other countries.² With this the “*Estadão*” portal was created, the Internet base of this now multimedia communication company, whose business is to produce and distribute information via print newspaper, radio, portal, news agency and in real time (a service called Broadcast).

Regarding circulation, the figures show that *O Estado de S. Paulo* fell from the second place that it occupied in 2001 among newspapers with the largest circulation (around 341 thousand copies daily at that time) to third place in 2002 (around 287 thousand copies daily) and fourth place in 2005 (around 231 thousand copies daily), surpassed in this period by the newspapers *O Globo* and *Extra*, two publications of *Infoglobo Comunicações*, the print branch of *Organizações Globo*.³ *Jornal do Brasil*, in turn, overcame the worst period in its history, between 1998 and 2000, when at the height of the crisis that threatened the newspaper’s very existence, it was operating with only 10 commercial contacts. In 2005, in the period identified as “recapture of the credibility both of advertisers as well as of the reading public”, the newspaper was still struggling to be included among the largest in Brazil and presented an average circulation of 64 thousand copies on workdays⁴ - a little less than the circulation of August 2001, a month in which, according to IVC data, the average daily circulation of *Jornal do Brasil* was 69,774 copies.⁵

In general, the two newspapers analyzed reflect a situation peculiar to the current Brazilian print media, with the newspapers trying to recover the reading public as part of a strategy initiated in 2004, after suffering three years of declining circulation. The journalistic companies are investing in editorial reformulation and in new graphic projects, including the launching of segmented sections and supplements, in addition to topics aimed at sectors of the population with less purchasing power. According to the National Newspaper Association, it was above all in this section of the market that the growth in daily newspaper circulation occurred: according to the Circulation Checking Institute (IVC), main entity for auditing of sales of print media in Brazil, the so-called popular newspapers grew 7% in 2004.⁶ In this context, even *Folha de S. Paulo*, in first place in the media in the number of copies sold, is

facing limitations on expansion, with figures that are stationary in the range of 300 thousand copies daily.

Methodology

Among the methodological resources used originally in the international survey in 1979, this text worked with the same category of copies: six days of one week, but with an inversion – starting on Saturday, without taking into consideration the Sunday edition which traditionally breaks away from the daily coverage pattern, with more space for special articles and/or texts containing opinion – and following with five workdays, from Monday to Friday. Therefore, this text deals with the week between July 22 (Saturday) and July 28 (Friday), 2006.

The unit of analysis is news and notes, since the latter are frequently employed by the two newspapers analyzed. From all the journalistic material, the option was made to take into consideration only the news actually published in the international section, even though other sections of the newspapers –such as economy, science and culture, for example, also regularly reproduce information from abroad. In the content analysis strictly speaking, the journalistic material was evaluated based on two main elements: the authorship (correspondent, news agency, not identified, etc.) and the sources (who “speaks” in the news).

The subject is explicit in the titles of the stories and here will be considered as a reference point, based on key words that indicate topics encountered more frequently, that can be countries, systems, organizations. The period of observation was selected at random, in an attempt to avoid events that in some way would interfere with the regular, routine coverage of international affairs and that could cause an imbalance in the journalistic information in favor a region, personage or topic. But this was not an easy task. In order to facilitate the observation of the material analyzed, the option was made to take into consideration as a third item for specific evaluation the geographic location of the news.

International news in *Jornal do Brasil*

Two characteristics became clear immediately from an initial observation of the journalistic material presented by *Jornal do Brasil*:

- 1) The reduction of space on paper – based on the adoption, in April 2006, of the *Berliner* format (470 mm x 315 mm, slightly larger than the tabloid format) – represents, in the case of JB, the reduction of the space devoted to the news, since it influenced the area calculated in square centimeters and, in some cases, the depth of the coverage.
- 2) The crisis which caused the sale of JB accentuated a peculiarity of the international section: the great majority of the news stories have no author identified, which leads us to assume that they were written based on one or more news items distributed by international agencies.

In **quantitative** terms, the international section of *Jornal do Brasil* published, on the average, six news stories and three notes in each edition, both on workdays as well as on Saturday.⁷ Taking into consideration the six days of the week selected, *Jornal do Brasil* published a total of 25 news stories, 15 notes (gathered together in a single column entitled “Resumo” (Summary), 4 captioned photos and 1 text of analysis of international affairs, which totaled 45 journalistic items distributed over a total of 18 pages and one column in the *Berliner* format.

With relation to **authorship**, of the 25 news stories published, 20 had no defined authorship (just the place of origin of the story) and 5 texts were signed – of these, just two by the same journalist, without identification of the professional link to the newspaper (correspondent, special envoy, agency), which makes one suppose that they are free-lance reporters acting in areas in conflict.

Regarding the **sources** (the actors) of the stories, four types were encountered: official, population, local media and institutional source. The dependence on official sources is great: ministers of State, high-ranking military officers, ambassadors, presidents, spokesmen and even a king (of Saudi Arabia) account for most of the information transmitted to the readers. Of the 67 sources identified in the 25 news stories published by JB in the week analyzed, 46 were official – the equivalent of around 69% of the interviewees. On a very reduced scale, the sources (actors) of the remaining 31% were the local population, with 11 residents consulted; the local media, the basis for the information on 5 occasions; and those classified as institutional sources (universities, research or study centers) that were also heard 5 times among the 67 identified sources.

Another data item analyzed was the **geographic location** of the news stories: the Middle East, and in this case the conflict between Lebanon and Israel, dominated the international news of *Jornal do Brasil* in the last week of July 2006 and was the topic included in the few signed stories. As a counterpoint, Latin America was mentioned in only 3 notes, while the captioned photos served as a resource for publication: a) of the unusual event – such as the United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the piano in Malasia; b) of the official event from the Brazilian side – Ambassador Celso Amorim in Turkey accompanying the mission to rescue the Brazilians who were fleeing from Lebanon; or c) of the event pertaining to the world of celebrities – a photo of the daughter of actors Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt. During the week selected, the reader of JB was informed in this way of the events in the world.

International news in *O Estado de S. Paulo*

The differences between *Jornal do Brasil* and *O Estado de S. Paulo* are perceptible even for those who do not exercise any journalistic activity, starting with the most obvious: the format, which continues to be Standard, and the volume of news, with a greater number of pages devoted to the international section. And it is exactly this second attribute that distinguishes the type of journalistic coverage performed by the São Paulo newspaper. In *O Estado de S. Paulo*, in the considerably larger space reserved for international news, there is a variety of journalistic items (besides news stories and notes, articles and interviews are frequent), of authors (practically all the news stories are identified) and of sources.

In **quantitative** terms, in the week from July 22 to 28, 2006, the newspaper published 46 news items with their origin overseas, 9 news stories produced in Brazil about Brazilians in Lebanon and in Turkey, 6 special reports (4 with data collected by the editor specialized in arms and military strategies and 2 produced by a special reporter based in São Paulo). Also published were 7 articles (4 of them being reproductions of columnists of overseas newspapers and 3 signed by an American university professor, a writer and a former member of the Israeli Parliament) and 5 interviews as supplements or analyses of matters that were on the daily coverage agenda. The material was completed with the publication of 17 notes in the section entitled

“*No Mundo*”. Taking into consideration partial totals, we arrived at the following figures: 55 news items, 12 texts with situation analyses, 6 special reports, plus articles, interviews and notes, which added up to a grand total of 92 journalistic items.

Taking into consideration **authorship**, *O Estado de S. Paulo* utilizes more frequently in the editing of news from abroad the services of four of the largest international news agencies: the American Associated Press (AP), the British Reuters, the French Agence France Presse (AFP) and the Spanish EFE. Of the 46 news stories originating overseas, 22 were edited based on texts from the agencies: AP took part in most of them (19 news items), followed by Reuters (present in 14 stories), by AFP (quoted in 8 stores) and by EFE (in 2 stories). It is interesting to note that the Associated Press is the only agency mentioned in three news stories, Reuters in 2 and AFP and EFE in 1 news item each. In addition to the international agencies, *O Estado de S. Paulo* utilizes and identifies the news services of 4 foreign newspapers: the American “The New York Times” and “The Washington Post” and the British “The Guardian” and “The Independent”, responsible for 6 news stories published.

The use of special envoys by the newspaper was also recorded. In the week analyzed, 9 news stories were produced by two journalists: one dispatched to Beirut, in Lebanon, from where 6 journalistic items (news stories and interviews) were sent, and the other sent to Adana, in Turkey, the origin of 3 news stories produced by the newspaper’s correspondent in Geneva, Switzerland, transferred to cover the return of Brazilians who were leaving Lebanon via Turkey. In the material analyzed, three stories signed by the newspaper’s correspondents in Geneva, Paris and Buenos Aires were also identified, as well as 3 stories under the caption “special for *O Estado*” sent by a journalist headquartered in Tel Aviv, Israel, and 3 stories without authorship identification. With relation to the authors, the most significant data to assimilate is the identification of the authors as a rule of the São Paulo newspaper. This resource helps the reader to understand the focus, the selection of information that comprises the news.

With relation to **sources** (actors) of the *O Estado de S. Paulo* news stories during the week studied, five types were encountered: official, population, local media, international media and institutional source. The analysis of the news showed the latter’s significant dependence on official sources – grouped in the following positions: presidents,

ministers of State, ambassadors, politicians, government employees, military advisors, and policemen. Of the 93 sources identified in the 46 news stories produced abroad, 61 of them (or 66% of the total sources identified by the journalists) were in the official category; 16 (or around 17%) were statements made by the local population; 10 sources came from the international media (among them the American networks CNN and CBS News, the German magazine *Der Spiegel*; the French newspaper *Le Monde* and Iranian news agencies); local media served as the source on 3 occasions (1 Israeli newspaper and 2 Arab TV channels) and 3 among the sources utilized were institutional.

Regarding the **geographic location** of the international journalistic material published by *O Estado de S. Paulo*, the week analyzed showed the newspaper's attention was focused on the conflict between Lebanon and Israel. Besides these two countries, there were a reasonable number of news stories originating in Turkey, because it was from that country that the flights departed with Brazilian residents in Lebanon who left there in the middle of the conflict. In the middle of the news centered on the Middle East, *O Estado de S. Paulo* published some stories originating in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba).

Main comparative data

The comparison of the data identified and classified in this survey demonstrates the disparity, in qualitative terms, in the international coverage presented by the two newspapers. Today's *Jornal do Brasil* has no resemblance with what the newspaper represented in the context of the Brazilian media during a large part of the XX century. With the change in editorial control, JB entered into a phase of decline in the quality of its content, expressed in a dramatic way in the elements that comprise this analysis. On the other hand, *O Estado de S. Paulo*, despite the periods of financial crisis that confronted the previous owners, shows that it has succeeded recovering and occupying today a comfortable position among the major Brazilian daily newspapers, maintaining the quality of editorial content based mainly on the credibility of the news stories published. Classified by some analysts as "conservative" and "right-wing", the "*Estadão*" is up-to-date with the best practices of the modern press – graphically and editorially. In the exclusive area of international journalism it

maintains a staff of active and productive professionals, in what can be considered one of the best examples of coverage of the world among Brazilian print media. For better visualization of the three elements selected for analysis in this work, the following chart was prepared, containing the general quantitative data essential for comparison.

Jornal do Brasil & O Estado de S. Paulo
General Comparative Data – international news
Week of July 22 to 28, 2006

Unit of Analysis	JB	OESP
I) Journalistic material		
News	25 / 45	55 / 92
Notes	15 / 45	17 / 92
Captioned photos	04 / 45	-
Situation analyses	01 / 45	12 / 92
Articles	-	07 / 92
Special reports	-	06 / 92
Interviews	-	05 / 92
II) Authorship		
Without identification	20 / 25	03 / 46
Signed without reference to the author	05 / 25	-
International agencies	-	22 / 46
Special envoys	-	09 / 46
Services of foreign newspapers	-	04 / 46
Correspondents	-	03 / 46
Special for...	-	03 / 46
III) Sources		
Official	46 / 67	61 / 93
Population	11 / 67	16 / 93
International media	-	10 / 93
Local media	05 / 67	03 / 93
Institutional	05 / 67	03 / 93

Final comments

The data that make up part of this survey of a week in two Brazilian newspapers show that, during the period analyzed, the center of

international coverage was in the Middle East, more specifically in accompanying the developments of the conflict generated by the invasion of Lebanon by the Israeli army. A test-check performed on the last Monday of September 2006 to verify the topics dealt with by the two newspapers showed that the focus had moved away a little from the Middle East, but the region continued to be the basis of international news. In *Jornal do Brasil* only 3 news stories were published that day: 2 on the conflict, both without authorship, using as sources two foreign newspapers (the British “The Sunday Times” and the American “The New York Times”). The third news story dealt with the arrest of a Venezuelan Minister of State in the United States, without defined authorship, with material from the ABC TV Network and from the Venezuelan and American governments. In *O Estado de S. Paulo* on that Monday 7 news stories produced abroad were published, of which 2 were directly related to the Lebanon-Israel conflict, 2 concerned European countries (Switzerland and the Vatican), 2 related to the United States and one concerning Latin America (Venezuela). In the 7 stories, the international news agencies (Associated Press, Reuters, France Presse and EFE) predominated in terms of authorship, responsible for the content of 5 of the texts published, while one story was signed by the newspaper’s correspondent in Switzerland and another was material originally published in “The New York Times”.

The foregoing observation shows, with respect to subject matter, that JB continued to focus on the conflict in the Middle East, without identifying the authorship and utilizing as sources foreign media and official sources, while *O Estado de S. Paulo* presented some variations on the theme of its coverage, presenting news stories with identified authorship, with official sources predominating as the point of reference.

From the evidence presented by the analysis of the international material published by the two Brazilian daily newspapers, some points for reflection stand out – identifiers not only of the present situation of the journalistic coverage of events overseas, but also of the realities of the media industry, as indicated below:

1. The dependence on the international news agencies suggests that, despite the evolution of technology which now facilitates the access to information, there has been no advance in the basic issues that motivated the debate on the equilibrium necessary in the worldwide circulation of information. Going beyond an issue

restricted to the world of journalism, this is a question here of elements linked to worldwide capital. Brazil remains a peripheral nation, despite the progress of economically emerging nations, with which Brazil is aligned, alongside Russia, India and China (the block identified by the initials BRIC).

2. In the media (industry) economy, especially the Brazilian one, foreign correspondents today play much more the role of war correspondents, with their professional movements generally guided by the degree of importance of and by proximity (not geographic, but that of varied interests) to the conflicts that break out in different points of the planet.
3. The newspapers' production model runs up against several challenges, one of them being to maintain their readers interested in the consumption of print material. The movement observed in the United States and in Europe, which is now being initiated in Brazil, translated into the so-called "tabloidization" of the press, is an attempt to expand the reader target public and to reduce paper costs in order to maintain jobs.
4. In the world taken over by blogs, one path for journalism is the investment in the quality (reliability) of information, which tends to be achieved when the journalists exercise dominion of the text and full knowledge of the sources. The perfection of criteria that make it possible to measure information quality, such as the VAP (Journalistic Added Value, from the acronym in Spanish) System, points out one of the directions to follow. It is a question of urgent, necessary investment in the international journalism area.

NOTES

- 1 Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries. Paris: UNESCO, 1985, p. 10
- 2 CORREIA Junior, Milton. Estado de S.Paulo junta redações tradicional e on-line (Estado de S. Paulo brings together traditional and online newsrooms). Jornal da ANJ, April 2006. At: <http://www.anj.org.br>.
- 3 Largest Brazilian newspapers. Data from the Circulation Checking Institute (IVC) based on the average circulation between January and December of each year. At: <http://www.anj.org.br/?q=node/17>.

- 4 NOLDONI, Thaís. Um banquinho e um “jornalão” (A little bank and a big newspaper). Revista Imprensa. Mapa da Mídia, December 2005. At: http://portalimprensa.uol.br/mapadamidia/208_jornais.asp.
- 5 BARBOSA, Alaor. JB negocia parceria com Gazeta Mercantil (JB negotiates partnership with Gazeta Mercantil) Agência Estado, October 10, 2001. At: <http://www.observatorio.ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/artigos/asp171020019994.htm>.
- 6 Brazilian newspapers in 2005. ANJ data. At: <http://www.anj.org.br/?q=node/13>.
- 7 The only exception with relation to the number of news stories occurred on the random date chosen for additional checking of the material published by the two newspapers: Monday, September 25, when only three stories (and no notes) were published in the international section of JB.

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